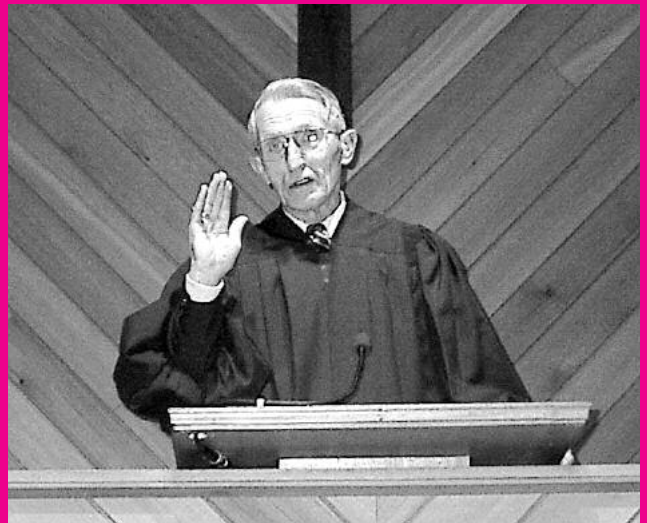


Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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How Beautiful the Feet . . .

Numbers

10:1-10

By J. Visscher



The Acts Have Arrived!

During the month of October many of our readers will have become the recipients of a free book. It does not happen very often, although there is a certain regularity to it. Almost every three years, in the fall of the year, a 200 to 300-page epistle is either awaiting you on a table in the church building or has been stuffed into your church mail box.

“What is it?” you ask. It is the *ACTS* of another General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches. This time around it is the Acts of the Synod of Neerlandia, Alberta, held from May 1-14, 2001.

“So why do so many receive this book and how is it that it comes free of charge?” There are two questions here.

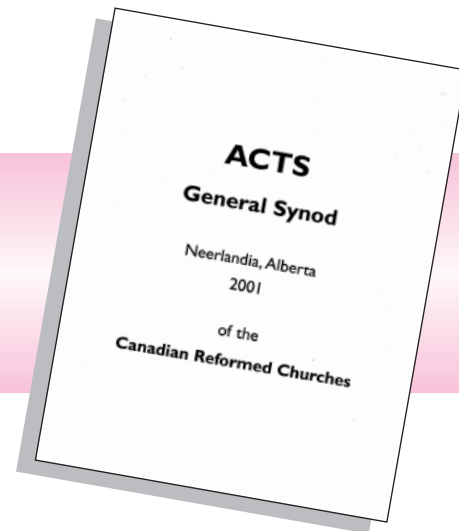
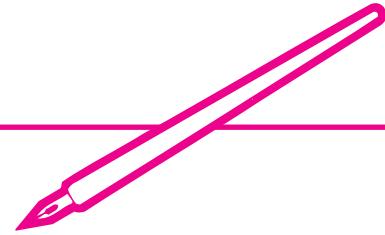
In the first place, so many receive it because years ago a decision was taken that all of the communicant members or families in the church should be acquainted with the decisions made by the broadest assembly in their church. Now, that is what I would call a good tradition. Of course, in this life there are good traditions and questionable ones, but here is a good one. Whether or not it accomplishes what it sets out to do is another matter. It all depends on how much interest the members take in these decisions.

Synod finally came to a crossroads decision on the OPC.

In the second place, there is the matter of cost. By now most of our readers know that there are no free lunches in this life and no really free books either. So if you are a bit of a cynic on this point, you are right. You do not have to pay for this book directly, just indirectly. The cost comes out of that one or two-dollar assessment that is levied for general synod costs. Now, having said that, I should hasten to add that it is still a good deal. After all, where else can you buy a book for the price of a hamburger?

My compliments

Now, I need to admit that once I received this book I leafed through it and read a good part of it. Why not all of it? Because, as you perhaps know, most of what is in it has appeared before. Those of you who have computers, and who have them hooked up to the Internet, will have read most of its contents as it came out on a regular basis while this Synod was being held. In spite of this, however, I do



have to compliment the first clerk, the Rev. E. Kampen, with a job well done. These *Acts* are well organized. The table of contents is clear. The type style chosen is crisper than we are used to. All in all, a professional piece of work!

Still, I do have one critical comment to make and this has to do with the format that Synod chose. Why are a number of decisions printed twice? First, we get the original from one of the advisory committees, and then a revised final decision. Why not simply say: “The proposal of committee I was received, discussed, amended and adopted” and thereafter print just one decision? If you want to show that this proposal was amended here and there, just italicize those parts. It seems to me that this would save a few trees and make the work of the clerk simpler.

What's in the book?

Moving on to the contents of the book, it has to be said that there is considerable variety in it. Like most previous *Acts* it deals with matters relating to the Theological College, inter- church relations, *Book of Praise*, Bible translations, women voting and various appeals.

At the same time this book is also noteworthy for what is *not* in it. I refer to the seventeen submissions listed in Article 6 that were ruled to be inadmissible because they arrived late. “A rather drastic move,” some would say. Having been on the receiving end of late appeals and submissions many times, I do not think so. It is a most frustrating thing to be delegated to a major assembly, to do

your best to stay on top of matters as they come in, to think that you are current, and then to arrive and have another stack of rather imposing mail shoved under your nose. How many late nights have not been spent over the years pouring over tardy submissions?

Now all of that might not be so hard to take if there were extraordinary circumstances surrounding these submissions, but that is not the case. Well before a synod is held, the members are informed of the deadline. It is stated over and over again. Why, the last number of synods even showed considerable patience and admitted all sorts of late material. But no more. Synod Neerlandia has dropped the axe. This means that the rest of us, churches and members, need to pull up our socks and make sure that we send our letters and briefs well before the deadline.

Anything new?

One of the comments that you can expect if you receive a publication any number of times is the comment, "Is there anything new in it?" Well, it has to be said that the news is not in what is new but rather in what has been done with the old.

What's inside?

By this time, the Acts of General Synod Neerlandia 2001 are in the hands of our church members. Dr. J. Visscher examines these Acts in his editorial. Hopefully, some of his comments will whet our appetites for reading the Acts.

Dr. N.H. Gootjes concludes his four-part series on the topic of drugs. In this concluding article, Dr. Gootjes not only demonstrates the clear physical risks of taking such drugs as marijuana, but he also shows how it prevents a person from using his life and his God-given senses to the praise and glory of God.

Dr. J. De Jong examines an address by Rev. Donald Van Dyken, fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches, at Synod Escondido 2001 of the URCNA. Dr. De Jong reacts to some of the statements of Rev. Van Dyken which were less than charitable towards the Canadian Reformed Churches. The intention of this article is to defend and promote the relationship between the CanRC and the URC, while at the same time encouraging the OCRC to be more involved in the unity process of Reformed churches.

In his *Observations* column, Rev. G. van Popta addresses the problem of fewer men seeking to become ministers of the Word. He offers some valuable advice. This is complemented by a report on a seminar by Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman who offers advice to ministers on how to remain productive and happy within the ministry.

We have our column *Ray of Sunshine* as well as several press releases in this issue of *Clarion*. We see that the different classical districts remain active in the Lord's work and the ILPB is releasing new books. The Lord has blessed us richly.

RA



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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Visscher

Managing Editor: R. Aasman

Coeditors: J. De Jong, N.H. Gootjes, Cl. Stam

ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION

26 Inverness Crescent, St. Albert, AB T8N 5J3

Fax: (780) 418-1506 E-Mail: raasman@canrc.org

ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.

One Beghin Avenue

Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202

Email: clarion@premier.mb.ca

World Wide Web address: <premier.mb.ca/clarion.html>

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The OPC – a new sister church

After a time span of thirty-six years Synod finally came to a crossroads decision on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the United States. It offered to enter into Ecclesiastical Fellowship with this church on the basis of an agreement originally proposed by committees of both churches.

What is perhaps even more striking is that Synod Neerlandia was so humble as to apologize to the OPC “for inconsistencies and lack of clarity in some of our dealings with them throughout the many years of our discussions” (p.49). Now, that takes nerve, and I applaud Synod Neerlandia for it. Of course, I realize that all of the dilly-dallying has not been one-sided, but at the same time it was refreshing to hear a broader assembly admit, perhaps for the first time ever, that we too are sometimes guilty of dropping the ball.

Prof. J. Geertsema decided to enter into a new phase in his life.

Having said this, I am also aware that there will be members who are not very happy with this development, to say the least. They are of the opinion that this decision smacks of compromise and will undermine our future Reformed witness as churches. While I do not share their sentiments, it should be noted that differences in confession and polity have not been swept under the table but will be the topic of future discussions. Already plans are afoot to have a regular exchange of opinions on these matters in a publication that goes out to office bearers and other interested members.

The RCUS – another new sister church

Another old matter that received new life has to do with the Reformed Churches in the United States. Our readers may know that a relationship with this church has been under discussion for some time. Now, after receiving not one, but two positive reports covering mostly the same ground, Synod Neerlandia decided to offer the right hand of fellowship to the RCUS.

The IRB – another new sister church

Although this church is not so old and has not received the attention that has been accorded to the OPC and the RCUS, Synod Neerlandia also offered Ecclesiastical Fellowship to a newly created federation called “The Reformed Churches in Brazil,” or IRB. What is especially gratifying about this development is that here we see blessed fruit on our missionary labours in this Latin American country. Together with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the Canadian Reformed Churches have been spreading the gospel there for years. This has led to churches being instituted, as well as to these churches coming together. Hopefully, the future will draw us closer and closer together and more ways will be found in which we can be a hand and foot to one another.

The URC – courtship and engagement

A fourth matter also deserves our attention. Indeed, while it is not old, it will have the most direct bearing on our churches. It has to do with the United Reformed Churches in North America and the decision to enter into phase 2. What this means is that the URC effectively becomes a

church in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Canadian Reformed Churches and that this relationship becomes a precursor to merger.

During phase 2 attestations are to be accepted, each other’s members received as guests at the Lord’s Supper, pulpits are open to each other’s ministers, various forms of local cooperation are encouraged, and so forth. At the same time three committees were appointed: theological education, church order and songbook.

Obviously, in the coming years both the churches and their committees will be busy. The churches that have not already done so – and they appear to be few indeed – will need to become acquainted with their URC neighbours. Every effort will have to be made to understand one another and to grow toward one another.

And that will not always be easy. Still, if we are going to be faithful to our Lord’s commands regarding unity and consistent with our past emphasis on the need for faithful Reformed churches to get together, we must take up the challenge. May God bless our humble efforts!

Related to all of this is the fact that the *Acts* reveal that Synod Neerlandia also decided to continue working on closer contact with the Reformed Churches in Quebec, the Free Reformed Churches in North America and the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches. It mandated various committees to investigate churches in Indonesia and Mexico with a view to possible relationships.

The Theological College

If the *Acts* reveal that Synod spent most of its time on inter-church affairs, it also reveals that considerable time was spent on the Theological College. First and foremost on the agenda was the appointment of a new Professor of New Testament studies. After serving the churches ably for fifteen years, Prof. J. Geertsema decided to enter into a new phase in his life. In his stead Synod appointed the Rev. G.H. Visscher of Waterdown, Ontario. We wish him every blessing as he takes on this new responsibility.

Matters of administration pertaining to the College were also on the agenda. New governors were appointed and old ones reappointed. New principals were designated. Board decisions were approved. The Free Reformed Churches in Australia were thanked for their generous support. All in all, things appear to be working smoothly in Hamilton.

I can only say that you are to be commended for doing good and brave work.

Book of Praise

Synod was also called on to make a number of decisions on the *Book of Praise*. For openers it was confronted with the rather embarrassing fact that the report of the Standing Committee was late and thus ought to have been ruled inadmissible. It decided instead to make limited use of this report. The wisdom of this move is open to discussion and one might rightly ask, “Why is there one rule for members and churches who are late and why are exception made for a committee?” This might be worthy of another look.

As for decisions on the *Book of Praise*, Synod decided to change the answer expected of office bearers from “I do

with all my heart" to a more simple "I do"; to prepare standardized subscription forms for consistories, classes, and professors; to continue the mandate given to the Standing Committee by the Synod of Fergus; to receive submissions for additional hymns from the churches; to appoint new members to the Committee.

While all of these decisions are worthy of comment, the one that stands out has to do with new hymns. From the submissions made by Regional Synod East and various churches, it appears that there is a growing sentiment that the Hymn section needs another look. I suspect that the problem is not so much what is in it as what is *not* in it. In any case, here is an opportunity for members and consistories to speak up and to send in their proposals. At the same time the discussions with the URC on the songbook may also have a bearing on the outcome.

Appeals, letters and Article 30, Church Order

As always, Synod received many appeals and letters. It is hard to comment on many of these seeing that we as readers do not have access to the original documents. Still, some answers to appeals and letters do raise eyebrows.

What does it mean when Synod says that wine is the "norm" at the Lord's Supper? (p.74). Does this mean that wine is the normal drink and that exceptions can be made, or does it mean that wine is the required drink and that no exceptions will be tolerated? Some more clarity here would have been helpful.

There is also the matter of increasing the number of delegates to General Synod to which a negative answer was given. Now part of the argument of Classis Pacific East had to do with perceptions of procedural fairness and due process. In its answer Synod pounded away at the word "perception" but seems to have forgotten about the rest of the sentence. It also does not help that this "perception" is alive and well and living in Article 71. There we read that four

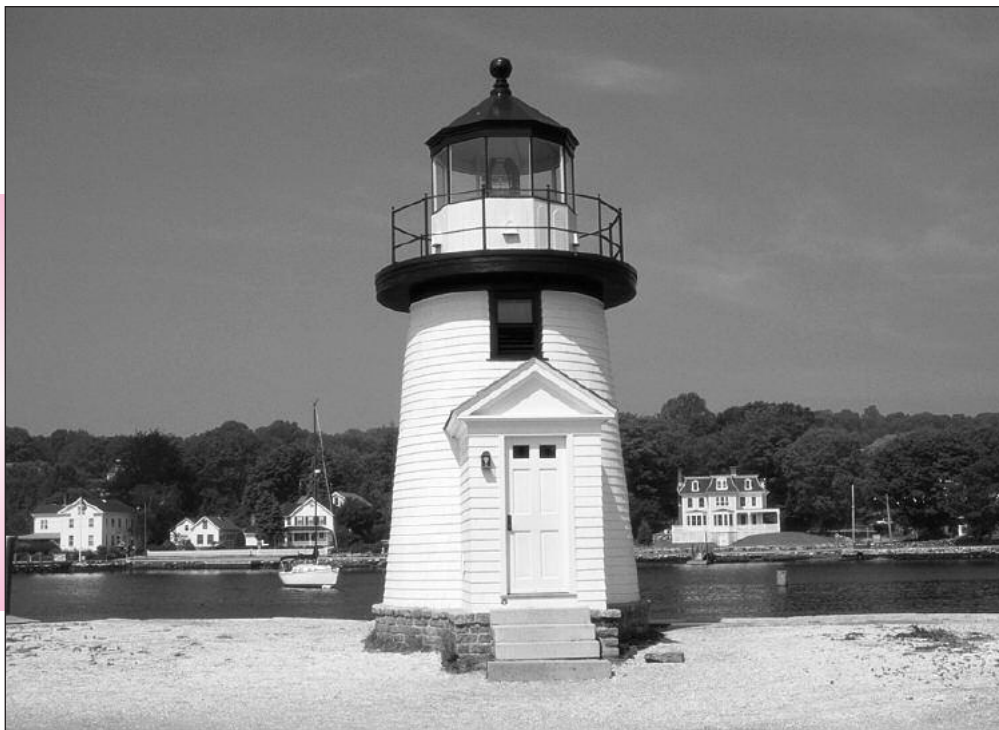
ministers, all originally from the East, indeed half of the entire ministerial delegation, had to abstain from voting on a certain appeal. Did they abstain from talking too?

Finally, there is another matter arising from these Acts that needs both comment and further discussion. It is the interpretation and use of Article 30 C.O. Over the years I have watched with some dismay as time after time members and consistories are told by general synods to go the route of Article 30 C.O. In other words, "your concern can only come to us and be dealt with by us if it has gone the route of consistory, classis, regional synod."

All of this leads me to ask, "Is there a new church polity afoot in the land?" My venerable teacher in church polity, the Rev. H. Scholten, drilled it into us as students that matters dealing "with the churches in common" do not always need to go the way of Article 30 C.O. It was his opinion that many matters dealing with churches abroad, Theological College, *Book of Praise* and the like, cannot even be dealt with by a minor assembly. To cite an example, one church was told by Synod Neerlandia that its suggestions regarding the *Book of Praise* needed to come to Synod via classis and regional synod. Why? How can this be? Since when do these assemblies have a right to make decisions on these common federational matters?

The book – a conclusion

Notwithstanding these critical remarks, and the additional ones that can be made, it has to be said that the overall impression left by this book, the *Acts of General Synod Neerlandia 2001*, is very positive. In some ways it represents a breath of fresh air and it gives an added incentive to being church in the world. So to all of the brothers who contributed to the making of this book, I can only say that you are to be commended for doing good and brave work. As for you, the readers, "tolle, lege!"



Drugs (Part 4)

By N.H. Gootjes

In this final article, three more kinds of drugs will be discussed briefly. We will focus on the results of these drugs. Some are intentional: the experiences for which the drug is used. Some are unintentional: the risks which people who use them take.

Hallucinogens

As stated before, the name “hallucinogens” is misleading. Someone who has hallucinations sees or experiences something that does not really exist. A famous example is the thirsty traveller in the desert who sees distant green trees indicating the presence of water. Usually, hallucinogens do not cause their users to see something that does not exist. They do perceive existing things, but they distort the perceptions.

Some users see the world in very intense colours. Others perceive the outlines of objects no longer as straight lines, but as swollen or even undulating. Perception of time is changed, so that a minute may feel like an hour. Another result is that the senses appear to be mixed up. Colours are heard, and sounds become visible. Under the influence of these drug, the mind no longer correctly interprets the signals it receives.

The influence of the different kinds of hallucinogens varies widely. The chemical LSD begins to work half an hour to an hour after ingestion, and it affects people for six to eight hours. On the other hand, the effects of the drug made from the peyote plant can last for about twelve hours. Another chemical hallucinogen, DMT, lasts less than an hour.

The question whether these drugs are addictive cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. There is no physical dependence, in the sense that the body craves for the substance after becoming used to it. Actually, when the body gets used to these drugs, their effective-

ness is greatly diminished. They do cause psychological dependence, so that a person who has experienced their attractions wants to enjoy them again.

Hallucinogens do not always lead to pleasant experiences. They can cause disorientation. The changed reality can be experienced as threatening, so that the user wants to escape. Snyder mentions that the loss of self-identity which results from using these drugs can cause overwhelming terror: “In such states, drug users have leaped to their death from windows, set themselves aflame, or killed others.”¹

*Hallucinogens do not
always lead to pleasant
experiences.*

When evaluating the hallucinogens, we should not immediately zero in on these bad trips to reject these drugs. First, the experience that is pursued should be considered. The main reason for the popularity of these drugs appears to be confusion of the senses, leading to extraordinary experiences. This must be considered an improper use of the senses which God has created: God created the senses so that we can know what is around us. Scripture speaks negatively about the drunkard who sees strange sights, and whose mind imagines confusing things (Prov 23:33) and this may also be applied to the use of hallucinogens.

The second issue concerns the result of these drugs. When people use a hallucinogen, they have lost control of their actions for a shorter or longer period of time. They are no longer accountable to God as they have abandoned their responsibilities in the pursuit of thrilling experiences.

The third problem is the possibility of a bad trip under the influence of

these drugs. People should not make themselves vulnerable to real dangers, simply for the sake of their enjoyment. Again, the sixth commandment is applicable in this situation.

Solvents and inhalants

This group of drugs is readily available. For example, they can be obtained from gasoline. The photograph mentioned in the first article, of young people sniffing fumes coming from a plastic bag they held in their hands comes to mind. They were abusing gasoline. There are also other sources, ranging from solvents which keep glue in a fluid state to the gas used in spray cans. Because they can easily be obtained, these drugs are often used by younger people. The effects of these drugs usually do not last long. Aerosol abusers may use one to three cans per day, and glue sniffers may go through four or more tubes in a day.

The dangers are varied. Glue sniffing and inhalation of aerosols on a number of occasions have resulted in sudden death. This is caused by irregular heart-beat when the intoxicated user is agitated as the result of hallucinations.

Gasoline sniffing can have several consequences. One is the loss of muscle control. It may lead to uncontrollable spasms, dizziness and lack of coordination. Chronic use may result in kidney problems, as well as damage to the brain. The solvents in spot remover and other fluids can cause damage to kidneys and the liver.

The “poppers” belong to the same group of drugs, in the sense that they are inhaled. The difference is that these are made to be used as drugs, while the previously mentioned substances are made for a different purpose and abused as drugs. Poppers are distributed in small glass vials, which are broken (“popped”) so that the volatile content can be sniffed. They cause a feeling of well-being and stimulate

sexual desire. However, repeated heavy use can affect the immune system, and cause respiratory problems. They can also cause a drop in blood pressure.

It is questionable whether the joys provided by the solvents and inhalants are worthwhile in themselves, for the high is not very sophisticated.

They are no longer accountable to God as they have abandoned their responsibilities in the pursuit of thrilling experiences.

But it is undeniable that these substances are health hazards. Schuckit states that these are among the first substances which teenagers try for a high. But using them is accompanied by headaches and a variety of medical problems. Most people stop using them after a few tries.²

Since these drugs can be obtained from products that are generally available, they introduce young people to drugs. After having acquired a taste for drugs, they often move on to drugs that provide more sophisticated pleasure.

Marijuana

Finally, marijuana and similar drugs must be discussed. They are discussed more frequently than any other drug we dealt with. Often, they are propagated as harmless. Different countries have different policies. The Dutch government allows this drug to be used, and tacitly allows it to be grown for own consumption. In Canada, growing marijuana plants is prohibited. On the day this was written, the local radio mentioned that someone in Hamilton, actually in a neighbourhood not far from the Theological College, had been caught growing marijuana plants. But there are voices advocating relaxing the laws against it.³ Marijuana is advocated as a helpful painkiller for an aging generation of baby boomers, and as a low risk drug for teenagers.

There are different varieties of this drug: hash, charas, ganja and bhang. They come from different parts of the marijuana plant: hash and charas from the resin of the flowering tops, bhang from the dried leaves and flowers, and ganja from the resin of small leaves. The effects are similar, but depend on the

way it is taken. When the smoke is inhaled, the sensation of pleasure begins earlier, when it is chewed, the pleasure is slower in coming but it lasts longer.

These drugs affect the senses. A marijuana smoker reported:

- My visual perception of the space around me is changed, so that what I am looking at is very real and clear, but everything else I am not focussing on visually seems further away and otherwise less real and clear.
- I can hear more subtle changes in sounds, for example the notes in music are purer, more distinct, the rhythm stands out more. I can understand the words of songs which are not clear when straight.
- My sense of touch is more exciting, more sensual. Some surfaces feel much smoother, silkier, while other surfaces feel much rougher, irregular, and the roughness or graininess forms interesting patterns.
- Smells become richer and more unique.

*Is marijuana addictive?
This question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no.*

- Taste sensations take on new qualities, and if I try to imagine what something tastes like, I can do so very vividly.
- When I walk some place my experience of the distance covered is quite changed so that distances seem to get greater.
- Time passes very slowly; it's not just that things take longer, certain experiences seem outside of time, are timeless.⁴

There is a considerable difference of opinion concerning the dangers associated with the use of marijuana. S.H. Snyder, who in general is negative toward drugs, mentions that several negative effects attributed to marijuana use, such as brain atrophy, have not been confirmed. He also refers to the fact that in some countries, a comparison has been made between the health of smokers and nonsmokers of marijuana. Neither x-rays, chromosome analysis nor other tests showed any difference. The only exception was breathing, where smokers of marijuana showed reduced function, similar to tobacco cigarette smokers.

Other studies are much more negative. Schonberg, in his book *Substance Abuse*, mentions all kinds of negative effects, both physical damage and behavioural changes. And Schuckit, while stating that with marijuana the intoxication is relatively mild, adds that there are significant health dangers.

Let us approach the issue from several angles.

1. Is marijuana addictive? This question cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Marijuana in its several forms is not addictive in the sense that people would continue to use it day after day. After three or four times, it loses its effect. In other words, it can only be used occasionally. However, it does lead to psychological addiction. The pleasures it brings provide a strong stimulus to come back to it to experience another high.
2. Traditionally, four dangers were attributed to using marijuana: brain atrophy, depressed immune responsiveness, chromosomal damage to the unborn child and a higher risk of cancer to the lungs. Snyder, who mentions these dangers, states that research has not confirmed these health hazards. But studies which appeared after Snyder published his book have confirmed that smoking marijuana increases considerably the risk of lung cancer. It would be hard for the government to use this as an argument to criminalize smoking this drug, as long as it allows smoking cigarettes and even earns revenue from their sale. However, smoking marijuana remains a health concern, particularly in view of the fact that the smoke of this drug has four to ten times higher levels of cancer producing agents than tobacco smoke.⁵

That leaves the question whether occasional use of marijuana can be part of a Christian's life.

3. In one important aspect, smoking marijuana is different from smoking tobacco. When people smoke cigarettes or cigars, their coordination is not impaired. Marijuana, on the other hand, affects their judgment, coordination and reaction time. It is dangerous to drive under

the influence of this drug. That is in itself not a sufficient reason to insist that it should be banned altogether. It does lead to the conclusion that no one who has to drive a car should use marijuana.

4. Concerning the risks for unborn babies, recent studies continue to sound warnings that smoking marijuana can harm an unborn child. It should not be used by pregnant women.
5. Long term use is known to cause permanent damage to the memory. For health reasons, no one should use it for an extended period of time. It is hard, however, to keep up using this drug only occasionally, for it causes psychological dependence.
6. When marijuana is used for several days in succession, it leads to withdrawal symptoms. These may last between one and four days after a period of regular use. The symptoms are mostly restricted to chronic users. This would make the users unfit to do their daily work on earth, for which God has created them.
7. That leaves the question whether occasional use of marijuana can be part of a Christian's life. Can this drug be used as a party drug, to enhance one's pleasure on a free day? To answer this question we have to consider what the effects of these drugs are:

The intoxication is also associated with some undesirable effects. These include a slowing of decision-making and reaction times (which can interfere with driving abilities), an impaired ability to think clearly (which can last for several days and interfere with school and work performance), some mild feelings of suspiciousness and paranoia, a mild tremor or shaking of the hands.⁶

It is generally recognized that marijuana is less intrusive and dangerous than other drugs. That is the reason why its use is tacitly allowed in the Netherlands, and some people support decriminalizing it in Canada. But when we know its various effects, we cannot enjoy it with a good conscience before the God who has created us.⁷

¹S.H. Snyder, *Biological Aspects of Mental Disorders*, 99-104; the quotation can be found on p. 101; see also A. Goldstein, *Addiction*, 191-202; M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 43-45; 73-75, 280-285.

²M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 46, see on the solvents, 45-49, and 285-293; and S.K. Schonberg (ed.), *Substance Abuse: A Guide for Health Professionals* (American Academy of Pediatrics/ Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation), 143ff.



Declined the call to Smithers, British Columbia:

Rev. R.J. Eikelboom

of Calgary, Alberta.

* * *

Called to Glanbrook, Ontario:

Rev. D. Vandeburgt


of Denver, Colorado, USA.

³J. Beltrame, 'Reefer Madness', in *Maclean's*, August 6, 2001, 22-29.

⁴S.H. Snyder, *Biological Aspects*, 124f., quoting a study by C.T. Tart.

⁵S.H. Snyder, *Biological Aspects*, 126-128; M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 71f.

⁶M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 41.

⁷See the discussions on marijuana S.K. Schonberg, ed., *Substance Abuse*, 129ff; A. Goldstein, *Addiction* 169-177; M.A. Schuckit, *Educating Yourself About Alcohol and Drugs*, 41f; 71-73; 306-311. 

God of THE EARTH, THE Sky, THE SEA

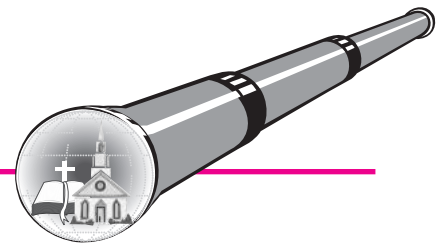
God of the earth, the sky, the sea,
 Maker of all above, below,
 Creation lives and moves in Thee;
 Thy present life through all doth flow.

Thy love is in the sun-shine's glow,
 Thy life is in the quickening air;
 When lightnings flash and storm winds blow,
 There is Thy power, Thy law is there.

We feel Thy calm at evening's hour,
 Thy grandeur in the march of night,
 And when the morning breaks in power,
 We hear Thy word, "Let there be light."

But higher far, and far more clear,
 Thee in man's spirit we behold,
 Thine image and Thyself are there, –
 Th' in-dwelling God, proclaimed of old.

Samuel Longfellow



Observations

By G.Ph. van Popta

How Beautiful the Feet...

Where are the preachers?

At present, we are running a 14% vacancy rate in the Canadian Reformed Churches. Seven out of fifty congregations do not have a preacher and pastor. On average, the federation of churches grows by about a congregation per year. Three of our ministers are in their sixties – likely, not that far away from a well deserved retirement. There is a constant need for missionaries. With only a handful of students at the Theological College, the vacancy rate will, likely, not decrease soon.

If we add in the need for missionaries the vacancy rate is higher. If we factor in what we should and could be doing in the way of home mission, the numbers go off the chart.

New Horizons reports with great concern that thirty-six of the 281 pulpits in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are currently vacant.

At present, we are running a 14% vacancy rate in the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Frank Stirk writes the following in *Christian Week*, a Canadian newspaper, under the title, “Churches contemplate clergy crunch”:

Hundreds of United, Lutheran, Presbyterian and Anglican congregations across the country are trying to function without ordained clergy in their pulpits, as reported by Canadian Press in August. . . .

The Baptist Union of Western Canada. . . currently has 15 openings among its 60 B.C. churches – a vacancy rate of 25 per cent. Brian Stelck, president of Carey Theological Seminary, worries that with about 30 per cent of current pastors expected to retire by 2005, this shortfall will soon increase.

. . . Bob Shelton, national pastor and evangelism consultant with the Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists . . . says, it is not always a bad thing for a church to temporarily be without a pastoral leader. “Some pastorless churches have had a history of being very difficult and rough on pastors,” Shelton says. “Perhaps in some way the Lord is chastening these churches to get their act together, so that they would learn how to walk with a leader. Basically what we say to any church is that before you can find the right pastor, you must be the right people.”

The Roman Catholic Church does not fare much better. According to the 1997 Vatican Statistical Yearbook, 58,000 parishes and 112,000 mission stations worldwide are without a priest. The vacancy rate worldwide is running at 43%, reports the Yearbook.

Focus on the Family reports that Canada’s Roman Catholic church is facing great leadership challenges. As of January 1998, nearly 2,700 Roman Catholic priests and monastic brothers were over sixty-five years old, and half of those were over seventy-five. And yet, according to the *Canadian Religious Conference*, the number of men entering the Roman Catholic priesthood in 1999 was only one-sixth of what it was in 1962.

The problem seems to be near universal. Over the past decade, the vacancy rate in the Presbyterian Church (USA) increased steadily from 28% to 32%.

The United Methodist News Service reports a similar problem in the United Methodist Church. The Rev. Karl Stegall, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, bemoans the fact that fewer young people are responding to God’s call to enter church-related vocations. He offers at least three reasons for the problem:

A society of materialism and greed, in which young people embarking upon career choices are asking, “How much does it pay?”

A climate and spirit at the local church level that do not encourage young people to hear the call of God.

Local churches, districts and annual conferences that no longer place a strong emphasis on young people answering the call for full-time Christian service.

Rev. Stegall suggests that local churches encourage youth to consider the ministry and encourage seminary graduates in their first appointments. He also challenges local churches to “remember that the bishop and district superintendents cannot appoint any stronger persons to their respective churches than the very same churches send into ministry.”

We do well to ask why so few men of our churches are entering the ministry.

“If members of each local church were informed that they could not anticipate receiving any stronger pastor than the kind that they had sent into the ministry,” Stegall writes, “I am fully confident that each local church would be more proactive in encouraging young people to enter the ministry.”

In Trust magazine had a rather gloomy report on “clergy shortage”:

One in five pastors of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is in an advanced stage of burnout, according to a recent study that minces no words in describing what “advanced” means. “This is not ‘I need a vacation,’ but ‘I’d quit tomorrow if it wouldn’t mess up my retirement,’”

according to Alan Klass of Mission Growth Ministries, which ran the Clergy Shortage Study. Klass reports that another one-fifth of clergy are in early and middle stages of career burnout.

The study was precipitated by the realization that the denomination faces a major shortage of clergy. In 1998, the Missouri Synod had 8,635 pastors – down from 9,940 ten years earlier. If the trend continues, by the middle of the next decade, one congregation in three will be without a pastor.

The study listed twenty problems contributing to the clergy shortage (and suggests solutions for each). In first and second place were listed, “people beating on each other” and “mismatching of clergy and congregations.” The Lutheran Church of Canada predicts a clergy shortage looming in the next four years. Presently there are fifty vacancies and in the next four years seventy-one clergy, three bishops, and several faculty at Lutheran Theological Seminary will retire.

Ministers do not burn out because of too much work.


Enough of gloomy statistics and comments. With a 14% vacancy rate, we not need be alarmed but neither may we be complacent. We do well to ask why so few men of our churches are entering the ministry. We would do well to address the issue.

Addressing the problem

The congregations need able men to preach, teach, and labour with the local elders and deacons in the pastoral work. Also, as Reformed churches we have a huge missionary calling. The nations have come to Canada. Every church (or few churches) should have a full-time missionary working locally. Between new immigrants who have never really heard of the Lord Jesus Christ and long-time Canadians whose parents apostatized and who grew up in unbelief, there is so much work to be done in our “back yard” that we could have dozens more preachers and yet only be scratching the surface of the great need.

How do we address the issue?

- We need to ensure that our congregations do not become places where ministers burn out. Generally, ministers do *not* burn out because of too much work. Although a minister may be swamped in the work of a large congregation, people are quite resilient. A man can do an incredible amount of work if the atmosphere in which he works is a healthy one. If the members of the congregation function well as the body of Christ (see Hymn 38:2, *Book of Praise*) and the minister is faithful in fulfilling the different aspects of his calling, he will do his work happily no matter how active he needs to be. Ministers’ lives are intimately bound up with the life of their respective congregations. If there is strife, the taking of cheap shots, gossip, majoring in minors, constant criticism – to name but a few destructive activities – your minister will likely burn out. It is probably just a matter of time. It is as we consider others better than ourselves that we give the Holy Spirit room to work powerfully and pleasantly in our midst. Burned out ministers lead to increased vacancies and decreased desire among young men to enter the ministry.
- Young men need to pray and think about whether the Lord wants them to pursue the gospel ministry. Let the young men take inventory of their qualities and speak to their elder or minister about it.
- Parents and elders need to speak to the young men about the wonderful calling of preaching the gospel. The Sovereign Lord raises up preachers, but He often uses parents and elders to prod able young men to consider the ministry.
- We need to evaluate our resources and commit them in faith to the Lord’s work. As Canadian Reformed Churches we have the financial resources to do big daring things for the Lord in the way of missions. Let us not be scared to do so.
- Most importantly, we need to pray that the Lord will send workers out into the harvest. We need to pray – privately, as families, as congregations.

We have a top notch College for training men to be heralds of the kingdom of heaven. Let’s fill it with men eager to preach in our local pulpits, our cities, and faraway lands. 



Who Shepherds the Shepherds?

A Seminar by Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman

Reported by R. Aasman

On a Friday afternoon of October 26, a small group of Reformed ministers and elders gathered together in Edmonton to participate in a seminar led by Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman, professor of Ethics and New Testament at Mid-America Reformed seminary. He began with an address which was particularly directed to the ministers: who shepherds the shepherds? At the heart of the answer to this question is the matter of *collegiality*. In other words, what a minister needs for ongoing support and growth is his circle of colleagues: his fellow ministers. Of course, the great shepherd is our Lord Jesus Christ. But the shepherds who are under Him need to act as shepherds to one another. In his address, Dr. Kloosterman raised the following three points.

The need to be shepherded

When a young man leaves Theological College to become a minister of the Word, his theological and intellectual development must not stop. There is always the danger that instead of growing intellectually, a minister becomes one-sided; he maybe reads a book and that suddenly becomes the source of his sermons; he develops an imbalance in his preaching, riding certain hobbyhorses and often having the same application. A minister needs intellectual stimulation. It is often asked at home visits whether members of the congregation are growing in knowledge and commitment. In the same way, ministers need to develop the skill of growing. He needs to fight the danger of running around in circles.

A minister also needs professional development. For instance, he needs to stay current with ethical issues such as the matter of cloning, genetic

Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman



screening and withdrawing of life support systems; he needs to stay current with the laws of the country concerning matters which arise in church life. The congregation is daily confronted with such issues and turns to the minister for guidance. In a professional capacity, ministers also need to develop good skills for managing their personal time and work, as well as being adept at reporting, communicating

The heart of the matter is collegiality.

and delegating work to others. Much can be learned from business models in society. Ministers should continue to develop the skill of communication: to be evaluated by secular people as to the quality of public speaking, can be a real eyeopener to a minister. One only needs to think of lawyers and doctors who continually need to upgrade their training. The same should hold true for ministers.

Dr. Kloosterman referred to C.H. Spurgeon who made the following suggestions for ministers:

- Progress in mental requirements. In other words, read, you ministers! There is a school and an intellectual

development beyond formal schooling or education.

- Progress in oratory skills. Ministers should listen to themselves or watch themselves on a taped sermon. They might be surprised, for instance, how formidable or even dull they come across during their elocution.
- Progress in moral qualities. Ego is one of the greatest concerns for any minister. He also needs to examine such things as his temper, levity, bigotry, moods, fears, and so on.
- Progress in spiritual qualities. A minister's personal walk with the Lord must show growth as he struggles against his sinful nature to serve the Lord constantly in all he does.
- Progress in productivity. Nobody really knows just what a minister is doing on a daily basis. Nobody knows how a minister spends his time between getting up and going to bed. A minister has to be a good steward of his time, watching out that he does not waste it.

Dr. Kloosterman focussed on the matter of spiritual development for a minister. While he did this, he drew together all that he mentioned so far – the need for intellectual, professional and spiritual development. Who helps and guides the minister? Who holds him

accountable, besides the great shepherd? This is where collegiality comes in: a minister and his colleagues. Ministers need to be monitored and supported by other ministers. They have their elders, of course. And elders have a duty to supervise the doctrine and life of their ministers. But as Dr. Kloosterman pointed out: ultimately, nobody knows the struggles and the challenges of a minister but another minister. How blessed is the minister who has a good friend in another minister. Or several friends. How wonderful it is when there is an environment and atmosphere where ministers can speak openly and frankly to one another: to encourage, to exhort and even to admonish. In such a collegial milieu, ministers help each other and stimulate each other to read, to grow, to think and ultimately to be better servants to the Lord and to their respective congregations.

How blessed is the minister who has a good friend in another minister.

Factors that exacerbate this need

There are factors which exacerbate the need for collegiality. There is individualism. Of course a lot of a minister's work is done by him as an individual. He prepares a sermon all alone in his study. But there is a danger when there is no peer review. He needs to be open to his colleagues about his work and to receive their advice. Another problem is the danger of making comparisons. Some will measure the success/failure of their ministry on the basis of gains or losses in church numbers. Of course a minister must look honestly at himself to see whether he might be driving members away. Again, collegiality is a protection and an encouragement for ministers to measure themselves only by faithfulness to the Word of God. Another problem is relationships within the congregation. Dr. Kloosterman is of the opinion that close relations between a minister and his congregation can be very detrimental to an effective ministry. Ministers, thankfully, may find their close friends among other ministers.

Another problem for ministers is their phobias: fear of failure, of not being able to feed the congregation, fear

of rejection and disapproval. Ministers can be paralyzed by their phobias. Clearly the shepherds need shepherding. They are not alone. They have their colleagues who will comfort, strengthen and challenge them to be courageous in their work and to put their trust in the Lord.

Suggestions for meeting this need

Dr. Kloosterman strongly recommended that ministers read the biographies of men like Luther and Calvin. Collegiality does not limit a minister to his present generation, but opens him to past ministers and to ministers who work in different parts of this world, often under difficult circumstances. When a minister feels isolated, alienated from his own congregation, reading the experiences of his colleagues, and speaking with his colleagues can be a huge help, putting things into perspective, and remembering that they serve not the whims of people, but they serve the Word of God.

Friendship is very important. In our individualistic age, friendship is not what it was, for instance, in the Middle Ages. For a minister to have a friend or friends among his colleagues where there is a genuine, mutual edification is a source of strength and encouragement. Many difficulties are shouldered when there is a good friend who supports his colleague. So ministers, cultivate friendships with your colleagues! It is not just a matter of entertainment or sentimentality.

Another thing that Dr. Kloosterman strongly emphasized was the matter of sabbaticals. A sabbatical is not a holiday. It is a change of pace. It can mean some time for study which cannot take place in the busy ministry. Also here collegiality can help out. When a minister goes on sabbatical, his neighbouring colleagues can offer to help out in the congregation that is temporarily "vacant."

Finally, Dr. Kloosterman recommended ministerials. Ministers should come together at prearranged times for the purpose of discussing particular subjects relating to the ministry. A speaker can be arranged, but he does not need to be an expert who is imported. Let the local ministers take turns coming up with a presentation. Don't be afraid of having some disagreements or of speaking openly. This leads to natural growth.

Dr. Kloosterman's thesis regarding collegiality was most appropriate and helpful.

Conclusion

After the presentation there was a lively discussion. There was, for instance, some debate whether it was wrong or unwise for a minister to have close friends within the congregation. One minister questioned the need for collegiality since his own elders meet that need quite adequately. Dr. Kloosterman, while listening sympathetically to his colleagues and appreciating their input, held his ground on the basic need for collegiality.

I, as a minister of the Word, felt that Dr. Kloosterman's thesis regarding collegiality was most appropriate and helpful. I told him so. I pass on his words to my colleagues and to their congregations as an encouragement that the shepherds see the rich blessing of their fellow shepherds. In making use of collegiality, we will better serve the great shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his congregation. And we will love and rejoice in the wonderful ministry which Christ has laid upon us. C

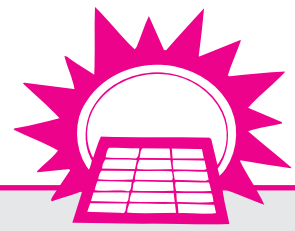


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By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in your sight, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.*

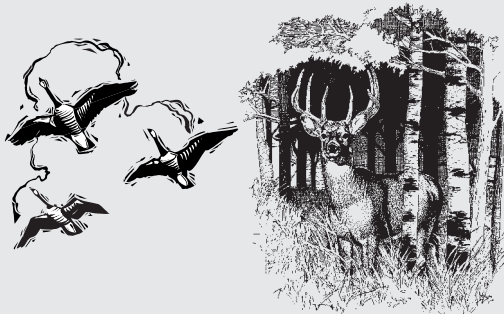
Psalm 19:14

God Speaks to Us in Many Ways

God's sunlight tells us of his warmth
That's with us every place,
That gentle rain speaks of his care,
The rainbow shows his grace.

God's mountains show that faith endures,
The oceans tell his power,
The birds sing of the peace He gives
In sunset's golden hour.

In miracles of everyday,
God's love is visible
In the refreshing rain and shining sun
We recognize his will.



And He who leads the deer home,
Who guides the birds in flight,
Will shepherd us in years ahead
Through pastures green and bright.

Just as God brings daybreak
And shadows fade away
Just as God brings flowers
And winter cannot stay...

God will give us courage
When the challenge seems too great,
Faith to see that answers come
When patiently we wait.

Peace and reassurance
Through answers to our prayers,
Strength to keep us cheerful,
And joy ... because He cares.

Author: C.P. Graham

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts, and hands, and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom his world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

Hymn 65:1

DECEMBER:

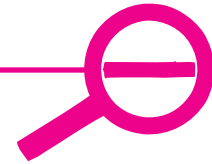
1st: MARTEN JANSEN will be turning twelve years old.
98 Morgandale Crescent,
Orangeville, ON L9W 3C7

Congratulations with your birthday Marten! May God be with you in this new year that lies ahead of you, and may you also share an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Till next month:

Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman
Mailing correspondence:
548 Kemp Road East
RR 2 Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
1-905-563-0380





OCRC Disappointed

Rev. Donald Van Dyken, fraternal delegate of the Orthodox Christian Reformed Churches (OCRC), gave a candid statement of his impression of Synod Escondido 2001 of the United Reformed Churches held last June. Given that the primary concern of the OCRC with regard to this synod was the creation issue, Rev. Van Dyken does not hide his disappointment with the results. While he did not expect an official statement on a literal six-day creation such as espoused by his own federation,

It appeared to me that the creation issue was divisive.

he expected a stronger voice against the Framework Hypothesis and the views on Genesis 1 that it presupposes. He also had some misgivings concerning the move towards the Canadian Reformed Churches and the progress of URC ecumenical relations towards our federation. Our readers may be interested to take note of his comments on these points:

Dangers and fears

Now I'd like to turn to an impression I felt quite strongly. It appeared to me that as Synod discussed creation it laboured to avoid what it saw to be two dangers. The identity of the first danger emerged as several delegates clearly warned against extra-confessional statements. Fear of this danger marked Synod's discussions and decisions.

The second danger was that the creation issue would prove divisive. The URC had enjoyed prosperity and peace in her early years. New churches continually joined her and she was free from major doctrinal disputes. She was entering this Synod with the prospect of coming a step closer to union with the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Since several writers extensively warned against these alleged perils before Synod, it was clear that many delegates brought the fear of these dangers with them to Synod. Although I have a very sympathetic understanding of the pressure the fear of these dangers exerted, I'd like to comment on them.

1. Extra-confessional fear

It was repeatedly asserted on the floor that we must not go beyond Scripture and the Confessions. I think the point was missed. The Nicene Creed will illustrate the point. When it confesses Christ "being of one substance with the Father," although it uses other than Scriptural terms, it does not go beyond Scripture, but rather reflects Scripture, giving the teaching of Scripture. So we echo the Nicene Creed when we say the words of that creed are of the same substance as the Bible. Can we not make statements following that pattern?

In coming to see our confessions and creeds as they've been historically applied, and with their present, clearly defined status among us, perhaps we've forgotten the posture of our fathers as they adopted them. When the Word of God spoke to the Churches in Reformation time, they didn't shy away from adding to the three great creeds. They didn't postpone confession awaiting wide acceptance of a proposed statement. They didn't delay until they had defined its exact role.

The dynamic Word called for a response – to the world, to the Roman Church, to the Lutherans, to the Anabaptists. This whole question of so-called extra-confessional statements begs for discussion. A living church reunited to the living Word speaks clearly, unitedly, to the world in which she lives. To do less while maintaining a confessional posture

tends to leave one open to the charge of confessionalism.

2. Ecumenical fear

It appeared to me that the creation issue was divisive – it was seen to threaten the unity of the URC. But we haven't made much progress if that's all we say. The doctrines of infant baptism and the Lord's Supper divide us from Baptists and Lutherans at those points. Our forefathers, however, first strongly strove to overcome those differences.

Other issues, we may judge, are not important enough to warrant separation. So the critical factor in the creation issue is not whether it's divisive, but whether it's important enough to warrant a serious and prolonged attempt to achieve agreement and failing that, to part amicably, or whether it's unimportant.

The church is not served by the formation of an ever-growing log book of official statements providing a form of consensus on every issue which crosses its path.

Another aspect to the fear that the creation issue would generate disunity involved the URC's relation to the Canadian Reformed Churches. (As some expressed it, Phase One is courtship, Phase Two is engagement, and Phase Three is marriage. Although marriage makes two into one it was not settled who would be husband and who would be wife).

What would the Canadian Reformed Churches say if the URC confessed a literal six-day creation and rejected all other views? The Canadian Reformed Churches are

not clear on the creation issue. They allow non-literal positions. More to the point, they adamantly affirm that a federation may not speak a word more than the confessions. It seems to me that the Canadian Reformed accords the Confessions the same reverence as Scripture. I always thought the caveat of Revelation 22 applied to Scripture alone – we dare not to add or subtract a word, it is sufficient.

Looking back at Synod it seems to me that the Canadian Reformed influence was marked. The URCs appear to be trying out the Canadian Reformed view of church unity, their position of toleration respecting Genesis 1, and their intolerance of additional confessional statements. If a recipe could be designed to properly blend and bake the ingredients of both URCNA and Canadian Reformed, we could have a great cake.

The ecumenical dimension of Synod leads me to make a few more general observations. First, discussion of and decision on doctrinal issues in a climate of ecumenical fervour has historically been fraught with peril. Doctrine usually loses.

Second, I would hazard the opinion that the URCNA is a little young to think of marriage yet. There are some questions about her own identity which only time will answer. Does the URCNA have a common – united – understanding of the real meaning of unity between churches or federations of churches?

Thus far the remarks of Rev. Van Dyken. I'm sure I speak for many when I say that we appreciate his candid and forthright remarks. The concerns to which he gives expression also live among many of our members, and we cannot pretend to suggest that the approach to creation is not a vital element in the mix, also in the ecumenical discussions with the URCNA. However, although Rev. Van Dyken asserts that his remarks are meant in a charitable way, some appear to come across as less than charitable – at least to the Canadian Reformed – and they perhaps should be considered a little more closely.

Extra-confessional Statements

Rev. Van Dyken defines us as being a federation that adamantly affirms that a church federation may not speak a word more than we have in our confes-

sions. As far as I know, such a statement has never been adopted by any one of our assemblies. Generally speaking, I would venture to suggest that it is not true. Rather, we would hope that the churches only speak those words which apply the confessions, and where necessary further delineate the substance of their provisions with respect to the issues of the day.

On the other hand, Rev. Van Dyken's own fervour on this point, is to my mind, a little over-eager. He asks why churches cannot make more statements. He clearly means confessional statements of the form and nature adopted by the OCRC. But I miss in this apparent zeal that tone of modesty and restraint which implicitly acknowledges that, whether it concerns our own or future generations, official statements ought not to be made at any arbitrary moment in the church's life,

I cannot but maintain that the move to unity is good for both federations. For the CanRC the union will provide a link to that which was always of the best in the tradition of the CRC; for the URCNA the union will provide access to the reformational influences on the continent in the 1930s and following years.

and the church is not served by the formation of an ever-growing log book of official statements providing a form of consensus on every issue which crosses its path. In fact, it can even be argued that the production of such statements has the flavour of appearing strong, but in effect being weak. For often the issue at stake is not whether a statement is made, but whether the churches are willing, with the means of discipline instituted by Christ, to uphold the existing statements by a firm and yet fraternal and merciful application of church discipline. Besides, confessional statements have usually been born in the life of the church at critical moments of conflict and persecution, times of the shedding of blood, and one of the marks of the humility of God's people is the recognition that

the times of intense struggle are high points not readily or easily matched by us ordinary folk living more tranquil and ordered lives today.

Noteworthy, too is Rev. Van Dyken's assessment of the Canadian Reformed stand on Genesis 1. He says: "They hold to non-literal positions." Where did the Rev. Van Dyken find his information for this conclusion? To be sure, the issue has been discussed in *Clarion* and other magazines in our circles. But to my knowledge there is not one minister or officer, or member for that matter, among us who defends the "non-literal" view of the days of Genesis 1. There has been some (helpful!) discussion about the general characteristics of a day recorded in Genesis 1 as compared to the day we experience today. But who spoke of "non-literal days"? I'm afraid the Reverend exhibits a certain preoccupation with the issues of Genesis 1 which leads him to erroneous statements and conclusions concerning our federation and its stand.

The ecumenical issue

Rev. Van Dyken is also a little flip-pant with regard to the progress of the CanRC-URCNA unity negotiations. We are said to be on the road to marriage but "it was not settled who would be the husband and who would be the wife." His own bias seems to slip out of the bag when he continually refers to the URCNA as "she," and then adds: "the URC is a little young to think of marriage yet." But where is our brother going with his metaphors? They are obviously being pressed to points to which they should never be taken. Given the issues and concerns facing the URCNA, I cannot but maintain that the move to unity is good for both federations. For the CanRC the union will provide a link to that which was always of the best in the tradition of the CRC; for the URCNA the union will provide access to the reformational influences on the continent in the 1930s and following years. So this is in every way a win-win situation. What has the age of any federation got to do with this?

Doctrinal integrity

Rev. Van Dyken also does not withhold the candid intimation that the ecumenical discussions are in danger of putting our doctrinal integrity into question. He says that ". . . discussion of and decision on doctrinal matters in a climate of ecumenical fervour has historically been fraught with peril.


Doctrine usually loses." I would hardly call the current climate one of "ecumenical fervour." The number of Reformed federations is increasing all the time, and Rev. Van Dyken's own group is just another indication of how fragmented believers here in North America not only are, but how fragmented they *insist on remaining*, come what may. But that is only an aside. What sort of historical evidence can Rev. Van Dyken bring forward to prove his point? And how would this evidence apply with regard to the current situation?

I do not see the doctrine of the church under threat in the current unity negotiations. To be sure, we will need to be on our guard. But is that not always the case? If the URCNA would tolerate the Framework Hypothesis being preached from its pulpits, I doubt our unity would last that long. However, the tenor of the decision on cre-

ation at Escondido 2001 was precisely directed against the idea of toleration. The synod decided, among other things, to adopt the following statement: "Synod affirm our commitment as churches to the Church Order's procedure in dealing with matters of discipline of those whose teaching stands in conflict with the Bible as summarized in the Creeds and the Three Forms of unity." This is precisely the position defended by the Canadian Reformed Churches on these matters. And if the URCNA will confirm these words by actual deeds if and when the time comes, then we will be standing with them on this united basis.

Rev. Van Dyken ends his remarks by stating: "I've given my impressions candidly and, I trust charitably, confident that my URC brothers will receive them that way." For us as CanRC brothers, the remarks do appear a little less

than charitable, and it certainly would be in order for our brother to correct the erroneous impressions of our federation that he is venting. It sounds a little like sour grapes. That may not be the case, but why then parade these sorts of misrepresentations?

Rev. Van Dyken would do more productive work if he would drop his over-exposed preoccupation with the "gospel of Genesis 1," and lead his churches to be more active in the unity process. For we have always maintained and still do maintain that churches that stand in God's truth and seek to maintain it have no right before God to stand on their own and journey through history as separate entities defending their own carefully marked turfs. Therefore I can only hope that the forthcoming synod of the OCRC will bring us a more joyful and edifying note. 

With much thankfulness, the Board of Governors of

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College



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Program and Personnel Committee, *Convener*

(905) 659-3354

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

Recently Dr. J. DeJong wrote about the gains and losses of the decision of Synod Neerlandia 2001 concerning unity with the URCNA (*Clarion* of Oct. 12, 2001). In this article he also comments about the decision of Synod Escondido 2001 of the URCNA. Since he has been closely involved in the unity talks for a number of years, we can all gain from the insight he provides.

I am concerned, however, that a wrong impression might be left about what Synod Neerlandia did with the Statements of Agreement. (These statements can be found on pp. 150-154 of the Acts of Synod.) Dr. DeJong writes, "Now from both sides (!) – albeit in different ways – these parameters have been bypassed, and we have in essence a much more open playing field." I will not comment here about what Synod Escondido did with the Statements of Agreement, but I do not think it is correct to say that Synod Neerlandia *bypassed* them. The very first consideration of Synod was: "Synod gratefully takes note of the 'Statements of Agreement' and the 'Strategy to Church Unity' as evidence that significant progress has been made towards federative unity in our contact with the URC. *These documents should serve as a general directive to the churches for use within their local discussion with United Reformed Churches*" (emphasis mine; Acts of Synod, Art 73). Synod Neerlandia did not bypass them; it directed the churches to use them.

Moreover, these same Statements of Agreement definitely shaped the mandates which Synod gave to the committees on the church order, theological education and the song book (Acts of Synod, Art 95). The agreement on the church order was that the respective CanRC and URCNA committees should produce a "suitable and agreeable adaptation of the

Church Order of Dort." Following this through, Synod mandated the committee to "propose a common church order in the line of the Church Order of Dort" (Art 95, 1.3.3). Part of the agreement on theological education was that "should the Lord of the Church grant eventual Union, the resulting United Churches will retain at least one federational theological school and that Synod recommend the school's professors and teaching staff for appointment." This agreement was inserted almost verbatim into the mandate which Synod gave to the theological education committee (Art 95, 1.4.3). Finally, the agreement on the song book was to produce a song book "that contains the Anglo-Genevan psalter and other suitable metrical versions, while including hymns that also meet the standard of faithfulness to Scripture and to the Reformed Confessions." Again, this agreement was worked directly into the mandate given to the *Book of Praise* committee (Art 95, 1.5.2).


It is true, as Dr. DeJong says, that Synod Neerlandia did correct some wrong terminology that came up in the CPEU report. However, this does not mean that the Statements of Agreement were bypassed. As the above examples illustrate, Synod Neerlandia purposefully integrated these Statements into our further work with the URCNA on both the local and federative level.

J. Van Vliet

Response by J. De Jong

I can appreciate Rev. Van Vliet's defence of the decisions of Neerlandia 2001, and will concede that my use of the term "bypass" here is somewhat ambiguous. What I meant to say is that the parameters envisioned by the Committee in its report have been *eclipsed*. Let me just clarify that sentiment with two remarks:

1. Anyone reviewing the report of the Committee will note how heavily the time frame weighed in the mix on the Canadian Reformed side of the fence. There are a number of references to the time frame, and the recommendation of the Committee reads in part: "That the Statement of Agreement *with its accompanying time frame* be adopted by Synod 2001." In other words, the time frame was envisioned as being an essential part of the Agreement, and was a point of such weight that we felt both Synods should commit themselves to it (see Report, Acts, 146).
2. The "correction" to which Rev. Van Vliet refers at the end of his letter has the added effect of removing the churches another step away from the agreement. The original wording, although perhaps somewhat infelicitous in structure, only meant to say that we move to Phase 2 *on the basis of the Agreement*; in other words, that Phase 2 will only be engaged *within the parameters of the agreement, with its accompanying time frame*. What is left of this? As far as I could see, only this remark by Neerlandia: "At Synod 2004, the matter of the time frame should be readdressed."

In sum, the Committee's belief is that churches who enter into the types of fellowship envisioned in Phase 2 should know where they are at, and what they can expect from each other in a stated and agreed period of time. Even the date 2007 seems to have disappeared from the table! In that sense we are left with an "open playing field." And from my perspective, I can only hope that both Synods will agree to a time frame at their next respective General Synods. Then we all know where we are going! 



Press Release of Classis Manitoba October 1, 2001, held at Winnipeg, MB.

On behalf of the convening church at Winnipeg (Grace), Rev. K. Jonker called the meeting to order. He requested the brothers present to sing from Psalm 89:1 after which he read Psalm 145. After a short meditation on this psalm he led in prayer. After an examination of the credentials by the convening church classis was declared constituted.

The executive consisted of: Rev. T.G. Van Raalte – chairman; Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt – vice-chairman; Rev. A.J. Pol – clerk.

The chairman of Classis thanked the convening church for making the arrangements for Classis. He also noted with thanksgiving to the Lord the recent fiftieth anniversary celebration of the church in Carman (East).

The provisional agenda was adopted.

- A report was received from the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches. Classis approved the recommendation of this committee to support the church at Denver with \$58,374.00 (Can.) for the year 2002.
- In closed session the church visitors reported on a visit made to the church in Denver in March, 2001.
- A report from the Committee for Aid to Needy Students was received. The Committee sought advice on the process of attaining and maintaining funds should the need arise. In reply Classis directed that this committee to consult the archives of Classis AB/MB as well as the Aid Committee for Needy Students in Classis AB for help in this regard. If any changes to the regulations for this committee are necessary this should be put in a report to be submitted by the committee six weeks prior to the spring classis.
- In response to a proposal from the church at Carman West to move approximately \$20,000.00 from Classis Manitoba to the Fund for Needy Churches, Classis decided to move

\$15,000.00 into this fund. Classis gave the committee the mandate to keep a reasonable amount as a reserve fund and that the balance should be put towards the assessment levels of 2002 with the committee advising the churches of the revised figures.

- Winnipeg Grace requested advice in the matter of discipline of a non-communicant member. Classis went into closed session and advice was given.
- In connection with article 44 C.O. the chairman noted with thankfulness that the ministry of the office-bearers was being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies were being honored.

The next classis will be held, the Lord willing, on either December 3, 2001 or March 4, 2002 in Winnipeg with Winnipeg-Redeemer as the convening church. Suggested officers: Rev. K. Jonker – chairman; Rev. T.G. Van Raalte – vice-chairman; Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt – clerk.

Classis appointed the following brothers as delegates to Regional Synod:

Primi delegates: Rev. J. Moesker; Rev. D.W. Vandeburgt; Elder A. Poppe; Elder C. Van Seters.

Secundi delegates: Rev. K. Jonker; Elder F. DeWit; Elder J. Toet.

Personal question period was held.

Censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order was not necessary.

The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved.

The chairman led in prayer after which he declared Classis closed.

D.W. Vandeburgt,
Vice-chairman at that time

Press Release of Classis Ontario South, September 11, 2001.

1. Opening

On behalf of the convening church at Hamilton, Rev. Cl. Stam asks the assembly to sing Psalm 93:1 and 4, and reads Psalm 93. After prayer, he welcomes all the delegates and various guests.

2. Credentials

The credentials are examined by the convening church and found to be in order. The church at Blue Bell PA has only one delegate. There are two instructions, one from the church at Glanbrook and the other from the church at Grassie.

3. Constitution of Classis

Classis is declared constituted and the officers take their place:

chairman: Rev. J. van Vliet.

vice-chairman: Rev. Cl. Stam.

clerk: Rev. J. E. Ludwig.

The chairman especially welcomes the delegates from the new congregations at Glanbrook and Grassie, Rev. J.G. Slaa (the new pastor of Kerwood) present for the first time as such, and the URC delegate Rev. D. Royall. Some memorabilia are noted. The health of br. H. Plug is still a matter of concern and will be remembered in prayer. A delegate of the OPC is also expected.* School children are expected to visit, and will be accommodated. Agenda point 6 will be moved for the sake of the pupils. *The OPC delegate, Rev. J. Ferguson of London, arrived late.

4. Agenda

A few items are added to the provisional agenda: a letter from the classis Niagara of the URC and one from the Council of the church at Lincoln. Rev. Royall will receive opportunity to address Classis.

The agenda is then adopted.

5. Overture from the Church at Ancaster re restructuring of Classis Ontario South

The church at Ancaster proposes a restructuring of Classis Ontario South into Classis Ontario West and Classis Niagara to be effective on January 1, 2002. This proposal is discussed. It is decided to adopt this proposal with the understanding that support for needy churches and mission remains the joint responsibility of the churches in the former classis. New needy churches will be the responsibility of the new Classis.

6. Overture Church at Ancaster re Preparatory Examination of Students

The church at Ancaster proposes that the preparatory examination of graduates from the Theological College be conducted by "their own home Classis". This would entail approaching Regional Synod to approach General Synod to make a change to Article 4.B.1 as follows, "...have passed a preparatory examination by the Classis from which they originally came." This would apply to North American students only. Classis decides not to accept this proposal for the reason that the new Classes shall help each other in the examinations, if necessary and requested.

7. Overture from the Church at Ancaster re OPC Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario

The church at Ancaster proposes to invite a representative of the OPC Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario to each Classis. The grounds are: a) we are in a relationship of ecclesiastical fellowship with the OPC b) the geographical area of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario coincides with most of the classical resort of Ontario South. c) such an invitation would be consistent with a previous decision of Classis Ontario South regarding the United Reformed Church in North America.

Classis decides that this shall at this time be decided only for the next Classis, since restructuring of the classical areas has been decided upon.

8. Question Period ad Art. 44 C.O.

The required questions are asked and answered. All churches continue to maintain the adopted church order. The churches do not need the advice of Classis in any matter.

9. Fraternal Delegate URC

The fraternal delegate of the URC, Rev. D. Royall, addresses Classis and expresses the hope and expectation that the URC will ratify the decision of their General Synod Escondido. He expresses joy at the ever-increasing fellowship. Rev. G. van Popta responds with words of thankfulness.

10. Instructions

The church at Glanbrook requests that Dr. J. de Jong be appointed as their counselor. This is granted. Pulpit supply is arranged for the period of one year. The church at Grassie requests that Rev. J. van Vliet be appointed as their counselor. This is also granted.

11. Report and Audit of the Fund for Needy Churches

On behalf of the church at Ancaster, br. W. Smouter presents the report. No new funds are requested at this time, but the church at Grand Rapids will have a request for help for the year 2002. The books of the fund have been audited and found to be in order.

12. Invitation to Classis URC

A letter of invitation is received to attend the URC Classis of Southern Ontario to be held Sept 26, at Clinton ON. Rev. G. van Popta is delegated to represent Classis Ontario South.

13. Request Church at Lincoln

The church at Lincoln requests not to have their minister, Rev. J. van Vliet, appointed to any classical committee for the time being, when classis is split into two classes, because of his workload and studies. It is decided that the church at Lincoln should raise this matter in future at Classis Niagara.

14. Reports

There are no church visitation reports. It is decided to leave the matter of visitation until 2002 after the new classical districts have been determined.

15. Appointments

- a) Delegates to Regional Synod to be held on November 7 at Ancaster: Agema, Ludwig and Slaa (ministers, alternates: Kok, Stam, van Popta, in that order), J. Koster, Wm. Smouter, G. van Woudenberg (elders, alternates: Engbers, Hummel, Lof, in that order).
- b) Next Classis: convening church: Kerwood.
Location: Smithville
Officers: H. Versteeg, chairman; J. van Vliet, clerk; G. van Popta, vice-chairman.
- c) the church at Ancaster is reappointed as church for needy churches.

16. Personal question period is held.

17. Censure ad Art. 34 is not necessary.

18. The Acts are read and adopted.

19. The Press release is read and approved.

20. Closing

The chairman, Rev. van Vliet, requests the delegates to sing Psalm 46 1, 5, leads in thanksgiving and prayer, and closes the meeting.

For Classis
Cl. Stam, vice-chairman e.t.

Press Release of the meeting of the Board of Directors of the I.L.P.B. with the Administration Committee Friday, September 28, 2001.


The Inter-League Publication Board consists of a Board of Directors and an Administration Committee. The Board of Directors is made up of: Mr. Ed VanderLaan and Mr. Don Bos representing the Men's League, Mrs. Chandra Vanderboom and Mrs. Elaine Spriensma representing the Women's League. Unfortunately we have no representatives from the Young People's League. The Administration Committee is made up of: Mr. John Schouten, Mrs. Nellie Plouffe, Mr. Bernie Kottelenberg, Mrs. Anne Boeringa, Mrs. Tammy Blokhuis and Mrs. Rennie Pieterman.

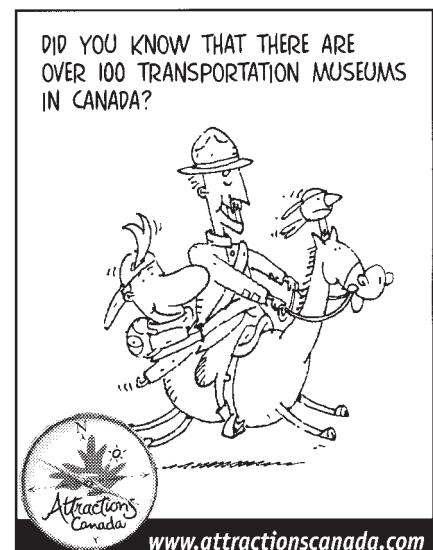
We are pleased to inform you that an outline on Genesis is now available. Acts Volume 2 and Believe and Confess Volume 1 should be available by the end of this year.

The number of books sold has been similar to last year. We will try to focus on advertising in the early spring.

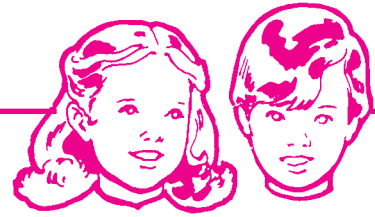
The financial statements were reviewed with the auditors report. The budget was approved.

In the future a comment form will be included with ILPB orders. We hope to receive feedback on the quality of books being published. Our website <http://spindleworks.com/ILPB> is being updated.

The meeting opened and closed in the usual Christian manner. 



By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

Winter is on its way. Yippee! Don't you just love that time when it is cold and frosty most days? Snow, ice, sledding, skiing, ice skating, ice hockey, snowballs, snowmen, etc.

Did you know that in some places, the temperature is actually going the other way? In places such as Africa, South America, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia, the season that is on its way is summer. There they will be having heat, and many people will be on the beach or in the pool, as it can be very hot sometimes.

That sounds very odd, doesn't it? And yet that is the way that God planned it when He created the earth. He created the Northern and the Southern Hemisphere. Then He created the weather to be the opposite on each of those hemispheres. That is why, while in Canada, North America, Europe and Russia, the temperature is getting colder, while in the Southern Hemisphere the temperature is getting warmer.

Isn't that amazing! But then, God's creation is amazing, it is really awesome. We see so many different things in nature. We must realize how thankful we should be for His awesome deeds and his awesome creation.

Lots of love, Aunt Betty

What Fools

Name the person.

1. He attempted to dethrone God's chosen one.
2. He ignored the counsel of old and experienced men.
3. This biggest fool of all thought that he could mislead the Saviour
4. A king who allowed a woman to make a fool of him.
5. How ridiculous they were to think that they could seal Christ's tomb.
6. He imagined that the gift of the Holy Spirit could be purchased with money.
7. He wanted to wait for a more convenient season to accept Christ.
8. He preferred the advice of the ship's master to Paul's.
9. What fools to demand the death of Him who had come to save them.
10. They seemingly thought that their lamps would burn without oil.
11. He wanted Jesus to speak to his brother about dividing the inheritance.
12. They tried by money to suppress the news of the Resurrection.
13. Outward form and ceremony was of greater importance to them than heart purity and sincerity.
14. This foolish bird 'sits on eggs and does not hatch them.'
15. This fool thought that he could kill Christ.
16. These foolish ones imagined Paul and Barnabas to be gods.
17. Paul reprimanded these foolish ones for turning from faith in Christ to faith in works.

Puzzles

Alphabetical Order

Twenty words of importance connected with the life, work and character of Jesus have been re-written below with the letters of each word in alphabetical order. Apart from the fact that words obviously linked with the beginning and end of Jesus' life are placed accordingly, the other words follow no particular order. To help you, however, the following information is given. Two of the words you are seeking begin with A, one with B, two with C, one with D, one with F, two with H, one with I, two with M, three with P, two with R, one with S and two with T. What are the words in their usual spelling?

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. AACIINNORT | 11. AABELPRS |
| 2. EEGHINORSSSTU | 12. EEFGINORSSV |
| 3. HIILMTUY | 13. ACEILMRS |
| 4. AEPRRY | 14. AAFGIINNORRSTTU |
| 5. AEIMNOPTTT | 15. AGIINNNOT |
| 6. CDEIILPSS | 16. AAILNOSTV |
| 7. AEGHILN | 17. AABELRTY |
| 8. ACEGHINPR | 18. CCFIINNORUX |
| 9. DEILMSTTUU | 19. CEEINORRRSTU |
| 10. ACIMNOOPSS | 20. ACEINNOSS |

Prophecies Fulfilled

Using a concordance, find the prophecy that was fulfilled.

1. Paul wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jesus would be born of the 'seed' of 'woman', Galatians 4:4.
2. Luke wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy that Jesus was to be from Abraham, Acts 3:25.
3. Matthew wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of the flight into Egypt, Matthew 2:14-15.
4. John wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy about the rejection of Jesus, John 1:11.
5. Matthew wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus suffering for us, Matthew 8:17.
6. John wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus' bones not being broken, John 19:33.
7. The write of Hebrews wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of a new covenant, Hebrews 8:8-12.
8. Paul wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of those God called 'not my people' becoming children of God, Romans 9:26.
9. Matthew wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy of the 'stone rejected by the builders', Matthews 21:42.
10. Luke wrote of the fulfillment of the prophecy about kings and rulers gathering against Christ, Acts 4:25-26.